

## OBITUARY.

PROFESSOR WILLIAM GRANT CRAIB, M. A., F. L. S., F. R. S. E.

It is with great regret that we record the untimely death of Professor William Grant Craib, a distinguished and very active corresponding member of the Society. He died on September 1, 1933, at Kew, where he was spending his long vacation.

As most members know, Professor Craib had been working for many years on the flora of Siam, and was engaged at the time of his death on a list of all known Siamese plants, his *Enumeratio Florae Siamensis*.

Craib was born on March 10, 1882, in Banff. As a student he was at Aberdeen, under the late J. W. H. Trail. While still there he accepted, in 1908, a temporary post in India, that of Acting Curator of the Herbarium at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Calcutta. Here he made his first acquaintance with the flora of Eastern Tropical Asia, both in the field and in the herbarium. On his return to Britain, in 1909, he was appointed Assistant for India in the Herbarium of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. While at Kew and later, he wrote various papers on the botany of India and South-west China, but these do not directly concern us in Siam. Of more direct interest is that it was in this period that he began the study of the flora of Siam, which became his chief interest in life, and for which he gave up most of his leisure. Craib began the same year, 1909, to publish the results of his Siamese work; at first chiefly descriptions of new species encountered in identifying the Siamese collections that were then arriving in Kew.

In 1911-1912 Craib published, in the Kew Bulletin, a list of Siamese plants, under the heading *Contributions to the Flora of Siam*, with the sub-heading *List of Siamese Plants with Descriptions of New Species*. The main idea of this list was to give species not recorded in Dr. Williams' earlier list (1904-1905). It consisted largely of new records and new species from Northern Siam. In 1912 Craib published, still in the Kew Bulletin, the first of a long series of *Addimenta* to his *Contributions to the Flora of Siam*. These *Addimenta* contained descriptions of new species from Siam. The

last one, No. 38, was published in the Kew Bulletin, i, 1933, only a few months before his death. Four of the *Additamenta* were by other authors, chiefly students trained by Craib himself. The remainder were almost entirely his own work, and accounted for upwards of 700 new species of plants.

In 1915 Craib left Kew and became Lecturer in Forest Botany at Edinburgh University, where he remained till 1920. In Edinburgh he published a good deal not connected with the botany of Siam, with which, however, he never lost touch. It was while in Edinburgh that Craib married. In his wife he found an active helper in his work. This Society is no little indebted to her for much assistance in the production of the *Enumeratio*.

About 1920 it was suggested that Craib should go out to Siam as botanist to the Royal Forest Department, but he decided against this. Soon afterwards he was appointed to the Regius Professorship of Botany in Aberdeen University, as successor to his old teacher, Professor Trail.

At Aberdeen Craib was able to devote himself more wholeheartedly to systematic botany; and he encouraged the study of this important branch among his students. Several of them have since made valuable contributions to the botany of Siam, and others were working on the subject at the time of his death.

Soon after Craib's appointment to Aberdeen, he had the misfortune, in 1921, to lose a leg in a railway accident.

In 1925 Craib commenced the publication of his most important work, the *Florae Siamensis Enumeratio*, which, unhappily, he did not live to finish. This work was, as members know, financed by the Society and published in Bangkok under its auspices. Its aim was to bring together in one list the scattered records of previous papers, often now very difficult to obtain, and add thereto the numerous new records and new species determined and described by Craib himself. It was a laborious task. Every reference was carefully verified and every plant examined cited by number; so that future workers might find a solid foundation to build on. At the time of Craib's death five parts of the *Enumeratio* had been published, and a sixth was in the press. This sixth part finished the Rubiaceae and

also included the small families Valerianaceae and Dipsacaceae. It is to be hoped that ways and means will be found to continue this valuable work. Its late author had already worked on the unpublished families and left a considerable quantity of notes thereon.

Craib did not confine his attention solely to dried plants. He was head of the Cruickshank Botanic Gardens in Aberdeen, and there got together a collection of living Siamese plants, to add to which was always a great joy to him. Ripe seeds were carefully picked out, when found in packets of dried plants, and sown. Even the moss used in packing plants was spread out in seed-pans, in case seeds should be lurking in it.

Perhaps in Siam the great work that Craib did for its flora is not yet fully appreciated, but in the years to come its importance will be fully recognized.

Writings of Professor Craib relating to the Flora of Siam:—  
Descriptions of various new species from Siam. Kew Bulletin, 1909-1910.

*Contributions to the Flora of Siam:*

*List of Siamese Plants with Descriptions of New Species.*  
Kew Bulletin, 1911-1912.

*Addimenta* i—xv, xvii—xx, xxiii—xxxviii. Kew Bulletin, 1912-1933.

(The *List of Siamese Plants* was reprinted, with additions, in the series of Aberdeen University Studies, No. 57, 1912.)

Various notes on new species from Siam in Hooker's *Icones Plantarum*, 1913-1922.

*Some New Species from Siam.* Gardener's Chronicle, lxxii, 1922.

*Six New Flowering Plants from Siam.* Journ. Nat. Hist. Soc. Siam, vi, 1923.

*Florae Siamensis Enumeratio.* Vol. i (4 parts), 1925-1931; Vol. ii, part 1, 1932.

*Some New Siamese Begonias.* Gardener's Chronicle, lxxxiii, 1928.

*Some New Siamese Plants.* Gardener's Chronicle, lxxxiii, 1928.

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